



NEWS RELEASE

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City Crews Clear Over 150,000 lbs of Debris in First Day of Storm Cleanup Effort

Multiple City departments have suspended normal operations for today and tomorrow and have gone into storm cleanup mode in an effort to clear the City of debris after yesterday's significant wind storm.

The fifty-four mile/hour winds, which hit South Bend around 5:00pm Tuesday, brought down twenty-six trees (or major portions of trees) and countless limbs. Many of the fallen trees ended up in streets and public right of ways, while others fell against houses and cars. Four City traffic signals were also damaged in the storm.

Departmental supervisors went on reconnaissance around the City last night, putting out cones and moving trees and limbs out of the street. Where electric hazards were present the City deferred to I & M and tree crews. Early this morning, over 125 people in crews from the Divisions of Streets, Parks, Sewers, Traffic and Lighting, Solid Waste and City garages began supporting the cleanup effort with the Waterworks Department on standby if needed.

"The plan is to work as many hours as it takes to get the City cleaned up today," said Gary Gilot, Director of Public Works. "We've started the cleanup by focusing on the public rights of way. Those should be cleared by tonight." City crews will suspend normal operations again tomorrow, as they focus on removing trees from cars and homes.

Early this morning, the Street Commissioner began collecting and sending status reports to the Mayor and Public Works Director. Reports followed every two hours throughout the day.

The Parks Department has between twenty-five and thirty personnel who are working on the list of 26 downed trees. Parks crews are using two loaders, two dump trucks, five flat beds, three chippers and two tree crews with high-range buckets. The divisions of Streets, Sewers and Traffic & Lighting have a approximately one hundred people on storm cleanup, also using two loaders and two backhoes, along with four sweepers, two vacuum sewer cleaners and fifty trucks. Solid Waste is grabbing limbs and branches with their yard waste collection program and has tentatively assigned two packer trucks to be available to Streets if needed.

City crews have divided the work into the usual four-quadrants around the city. By 2:00pm, Public Works was reporting that crews had cleared over 150,000 pounds (75 tons) of storm debris.

“Crews are being redirected and teams strategically merged for maximum effectiveness and efficiency in putting the City back in shape quickly from the storm damage,” said Mayor Luecke. The Mayor also noted how proud and thankful he was for the dedication and teamwork City crews had demonstrated in their response to this type of challenge.

“I can’t say enough about the men and women who are out there working as hard as they can and as quickly as possible to clear our roads and right of ways,” said the Mayor. “It is fitting that during Employee Appreciation and Municipal Government Week we see demonstrated such a vivid example of how tirelessly City employees work and how necessary they are to keeping us safe and prosperous.”

The City is anticipating that the Solid Waste Department will need extra support next week with yard waste collection, as homeowners continue to clear downed limbs from their yards over the weekend. Mr. Gilot cautioned homeowners who have tree services remove downed or damaged trees on private property, that they should have those vendors take that wood and chipped vegetation away as part of the private service.

“The City’s Yard Waste Removal will cover any smaller limbs that homeowners might cut themselves and stack for City collection,” said Gary Gilot. “However, if the homeowner hires a tree contractor to clear one or more trees, they should confirm that the fee includes removal of the cut debris.”